

**Minutes of the Howey-in-the-Hills Town Council Meeting
Held July 12, 2010**

Mayor Sears called the Town Council Meeting of July 12, 2010 to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Sears led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Councilor Crowder led the Invocation

Present: Mayor Sears, Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, Councilor Ernest, Councilor Crowder, Administrator of Financial Services Monday-Bolte, Town Attorney Blom-Ramos and Town Clerk Brasher.

Absent: Councilor Green

PRESENTATIONS

S. Lakeshore Blvd. /Revels Road Project

Traffic Engineer Watanabe gave a detailed report on the road project. He stated there are insufficient funds to do both roads so S. Lakeshore Blvd will be done first. He further stated the plans will go to St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) for review. He said no oak trees will be removed and the presence of gopher tortoises will be evaluated again and his firm will use Lake County's plans and working directly with Lake County. **Councilor Ernest** asked what the permitting time frame is. **Traffic Engineer Watanabe** said within 30-45 days as the other issue that may arise is relocating gopher tortoises. **Mayor Sears** clarified that the funds for this project will be paid by Lake County from Transportation Impact Fees. **Councilor Ernest** asked for a schedule to notify the residents and the School Board. **Traffic Engineer Watanabe** said he will get the Town Council a schedule. Discussion ensued. He further stated he will start dialogue with F.D.O.T. for the Revels Road intersection project. **Councilor Crowder** asked about the ingress/egress problem at E. Revels Road. **Traffic Engineer Watanabe** said he has discussed this issue with Lake County and there may be funds left over to construct a minor turn lane since the road right-of-way has been dedicated.

Traffic Engineer Watanabe said the MPO will be reorganizing the Funding Districts from 6 to 3 and the Town will be moved to the East District. He further informed the Town Council that F.D.O.T. will be implementing a Planning, Development and Environmental Study (PD&E) for SR 19 and Neel-Schaffer, Inc. will be pursuing that RFQ. He wanted to put this on record due to conflicts of interest.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of regular Town Council Meeting held May 10, 2010, Work Session held May 24, 2010 and Department Director Meeting held June 16, 2010 and June 30, 2010

Councilor Ernest, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, moved to approve the Consent Agenda as corrected. Motion carried 4-0.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel asked why there was a delay in approval of the minutes. **Town Clerk Brasher** said the minutes take a minimum of 6 hours for each meeting and time constraints are an issue. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** said she thought the Town had something that was just plugged in and the minutes were done. **Town Clerk Brasher** said the Town does not have that capability and all minutes are manually written from the audio recording.

NEW BUSINESS

Amendment to Interlocal Agreement with Lake County Relating to Provision of Library Services for FY 2010-2011

Library Director Merchant gave detailed background on the item. She further stated she felt this would be the time to notify Lake County that the Town will be reducing the budget for FY 2010-2011. Discussion ensued.

Councilor Crowder, seconded by Councilor Ernest, moved to approve the Amendment to the Interlocal Agreement with Lake County Relating to Provision of Library Services for FY 2010-2011. Motion carried 4-0 with a roll call vote.

Discussion: Library Expansion

Library Director Merchant gave detailed background on this item. **Councilor Ernest** said there should be enough funds to put this project out to bid and the cost also depends upon whether architectural drawings are needed.

Mayor Sears asked if there was a set of engineered plans and **Councilor Ernest** said there is not. **Councilor Ernest** said the biggest portion of the project is demolition and he thinks this should be done by the Public Works Department.

It was the consensus of the Town Council to defer this item to the first meeting in August and for additional information to be provided.

Set Proposed Millage Rate for FY 2010-2011

Mayor Sears gave detailed background on this item and said the Council was provided with a spreadsheet of the Ad Valorem assessments as well as State proposed revenues. He said if the Town keeps the same rate as last year the Town will have \$45,898 less in tax revenues.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel voiced her concerns and said the Town needs to make up the deficit somewhere and proposed a 7.2500 millage. **Mayor Sears** said the Town is behind on maintenance and with the water plant expansion project the residents are paying an additional \$5.00 on their utility bill. He said cuts will need to be made and services will no longer be provided as previously had been. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** said her proposed millage would be approximately \$50.00 tax increase for most residents. **Mayor Sears** said the current rate is an 8% reduction, which will be a reduction in services, no cost of living for employees and employees will be paying a portion of their health benefits. He further stated all expenses are increasing. **Councilor Crowder** asked where the money from the previous tax years was spent.

Mayor Sears said on unfunded mandates, increased expenses and equipment that was needed. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** said the residents expect a certain level of service and that is why people move here. **Mayor Sears** said the Comprehensive Plan will need to be budgeted next year and there are going to be some tough choices for the Town Council to make. **Councilor Ernest** said he agrees with Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel and the people don't want a tax increase; however, the Town cannot afford to get behind. The Town needs to quit playing catch-up. **Councilor Crowder** asked why the Town's millage rate is the highest in the County and how does the tax rate get balanced. **Mayor Sears** said due to lack of commercial and when the load of expenditures is spread over 600 homes, it affects the tax rate. He further stated if the Town keeps the millage rate the same, the Town will lose \$45,898 and asked if the residents would rather lose services and have outdated equipment or get reduced taxes. **Councilor Crowder** gave previous Town millage rates and asked where the money was spent. **Councilor Ernest** said the Town cannot take back the services the Town has paid for in the previous years. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** said when Mayor Bittner left, the Town was in a financial emergency and the Town has spent the money trying to catch up with outdated equipment, unfunded mandates, while increasing the reserves. **Councilor Ernest** said the cost of services, equipment and insurance has increased over the years. **Councilor Crowder** said the Town needs to make cuts. **Mayor Sears** said the Town's reserves have increased and expenditures have increased. He further stated the County is not paying their share of the Lake County Library Interlocal Agreement, which is a cost to the Town. **Councilor Ernest** said Mayor Sears squeaks when he walks. **Mayor Sears** said there will be additional unfunded mandates in the next fiscal year and the numbers are unknown.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, seconded by **Councilor Ernest**, moved to adopt a proposed millage rate of 7.2500. Motion failed with Councilor Ernest and Mayor Sears voting no.

Del Pearce said the Town needs to do what has to be done and he recommends 7.5000 and that is the millage rate he suggested last year.

Steve Barber said the Town is going the wrong way with a 50% increase in taxes over previous years. He said there are many homes in foreclosure and the Police Department is taking 90% of the tax millage rate. The Town needs to better manage what they have and reevaluate the taxes. He said not to increase taxes because there are hundreds of residents who cannot afford the tax increase.

Councilor Crowder moved to adopt a proposed millage rate of 6.8317. Motion failed due to a lack of a second.

Councilor Ernest, seconded by **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel**, moved to adopt a proposed millage rate of 7.0000. Motion carried with Councilor Crowder voting no.

Set Tentative Budget/Millage Public Hearing Date

It was the consensus of the Town Council to hold the tentative budget and tentative millage rate Public Hearing on September 9, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

Set Final Budget/ Millage Public Hearing Date

It was the consensus of the Town Council to hold the final budget and final millage Public Hearing on September 23, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

Consideration of Utility Bill Write Offs

Town Clerk Brasher gave detailed background on this item. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, seconded by **Councilor Ernest**, moved to approve the tenant utility write-offs in the amount of \$997.75. Motion carried 4-0 with a roll call vote.

Resolution 2010-012, Adding After-Hour Utility Service Fee

Mayor Sears gave detailed background on this item. Discussion ensued. **Town Clerk Brasher** said an amended Resolution for meter tampering will be forth coming which will allow a home owner and/or a licensed to plumber to turn water off and on.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, seconded by **Councilor Ernest**, moved to adopt Resolution 2010-012, Adding After-Hour Utility Service Fee. Motion carried 4-0 with a roll call vote.

Steve Barber asked if every home has a meter and a shut-off valve. **Public Works Director Padgett** said every home has a meter but not every home has a shut-off valve. He said there are some meters that are hard to turn off and on, which would make it difficult for some residents to turn the water off and on as needed. **Steve Barber** does not think the Town should charge residents to turn the water off and on. **Mayor Sears** said the Town is only attempting to recover the expenses for Staff to come out after hours.

Update on Employee Reviews

Councilor Crowder asked if employees' reviews have been completed. **Mayor Sears** said Chief Robbins and Public Works Director Padgett's evaluation have been completed and he will do Town Clerk Brasher's within the next couple days.

Update on Public Works Staffing

Councilor Crowder said at the May Work Session, the Town Council has discussed the need for a second water operator and he wondered the status of the second water operator. **Mayor Sears** said a second water operator is needed as the Town cannot continue to rely on other municipalities to monitor the plant. He further stated this will be an issue when budget discussions begin. **Councilor Ernest** asked about light duty. **Mayor Sears** said the Human Resource Director knows no employee can return to work without a doctor's summary of what an employee can or cannot do with regards to their employment position.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Bank Interest Rates and Bank Fees

Administrator of Financial Services Monday-Bolte gave detailed background on this item. **Mayor Sears** said the bank fees are much higher than interest earned. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Glennys Barber asked the Town Council to look into the "Green Bank" as they are located in Eustis and Clermont.

It was the consensus of the Town Council to bring this item back to the August 9th Town Council Meeting with information from Fair Winds Credit Union, Green Bank, and United Southern Bank.

Councilor Crowder, seconded by Councilor Ernest, moved to change the Town's banking to CenterState Bank, N.A. Motion failed with Councilor Ernest and Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel voting no.

MAYOR/COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Sears-None

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel-None

Councilor Ernest gave an update on the Silver Springs Citrus Plant annexation.

Councilor Crowder asked about the status of the record storage building. **Mayor Sears** said no action has been taken.

Councilor Crowder said he would like to make a motion to reduce the Legislative salary 50% and for the reduction to be used for a 2% salary increase for Town employees and for the Town Council to be paid by the meeting, not by the month, with attendance to be required to be paid. He said there is low moral with the employees and this will help with the moral. **Mayor Sears** said the 2% increase will help the employees pay their portion of health benefits. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel said she expected the Legislative salary to be cut 5% and she feels that the Town Council attendance procedures should be discussed. **Councilor Crowder** said the Council attendance issue has been discussed on several occasions and a decision needs to be made. **Mayor Sears** said he does not mind the idea presented but there is no back-up and he would like this subject to be continued to the August 9, 2010 Town Council Meeting.

Councilor Crowder, seconded by Councilor Ernest, moved to reduce the Legislative salary by 50% and revenue generated from the Legislative reduction to be used for a 2% staff salary increase and for Town Council to be paid by the meeting, not by the month with attendance required to be paid. Motion died with Councilor Ernest, Mayor

Pro-Tem Nebel and Mayor Sears voting no.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Glennys Barber said she was glad Councilor Crowder brought up Councilor's Green attendance, she is annoyed about his lack of attendance and she is sick of tax dollars being wasted. She further stated the budget should be leveled out so all departments get a fair shake of the tax money.

Kotonya said she likes living in Town and the Town should work together. She would like to see more citizens volunteer and would like better customer service. She also asked why it is okay for the Library employee/ volunteers to be alone but it is not okay for Town Hall employees to be alone.

Steve Barber said he is disappointed on the Lakeshore Blvd. project and this project should have been designed with an artistic vision to include center islands, lighting, benches, etc. This project should be a show piece not just pavement and this would attract businesses and this is the biggest asset that Howey has. He further said the sidewalk on the 400 block of Lakeshore Blvd is not safe and this needs to be addressed.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:20 p.m.


Chris Sears, Mayor

ATTEST:


Brenda Brasher, CMC
Town Clerk